

IN THE CLAIMS

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1. (Original) A system for managing questions submitted by a person with a question (i.e., a question poser) and answered by one or more experts comprising:

- a question management server;
- a question poser communication interface;
- an expert communication interface;
- an expert ranking database for maintaining a list of experts in one or more categories along with an item of information indicative of one or more factors selected from a group of factors consisting of timeliness of an expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by an expert;
- an expert set determinator for extracting a set of experts in a particular category from the expert ranking database; and
- a sliding window manager for extracting a contiguous subset of the set of experts to whom to send a question received from a question poser.

2. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

- a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser;
- and
- a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the feedback received from the question poser.

3. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

- an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a question; and
- a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question.

4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

- a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser;
- an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to

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answer a question; and

a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question and the feedback received from the question poser.

5. (Original) A method on a server for managing questions received via a network from a plurality of client systems comprising steps of:

receiving a question from a question poser using a client system;
extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores;
selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores; and
providing the question to the subset of experts.

6. (Original) A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:

receiving an answers from an expert; and
sending the answer to the question poser.

7. (Original) A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:

receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an answer provided by the expert; and
adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback response.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 6, further comprising steps of:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and
adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time taken.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 6, comprising a step of:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;
reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in ~~thea~~
subject category; and

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adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

reading a time limit;

starting a timer;

waiting until the timer reaches the time limit; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer having reached the time limit.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10 wherein the step of reading a time limit comprises a substep of:

receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;

and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.

13. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;

performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit declination to a preselected declination limit time; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

14. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and

receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too

short.

A2 15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, further comprising steps of:
storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit was too short;

waiting until a time period has elapsed;

obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;

performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and

adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

16. (Original) A method for operating an expert answer web site comprising steps of:

receiving a question from a question poser;

selecting a set of experts on the basis of one or more factors selected from a group of factors consisting of the timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert; and

notifying the set of experts of the question.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

generating and sending a ~~generating a~~ web page including the question.

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20. (Original) A computer readable medium containing programming instructions for managing a question answer system comprising programming instructions for:

- receiving a question from a question poser;
- extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores;
- selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores;
- providing the question to the subset of experts;

21. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising programming instructions for:

- receiving an answers from an expert; and
- sending the answer to the question poser.

22. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising programming instruction for:

- receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an answer provided by the expert; and
- adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback response.

23. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 21, further comprising programming instructions for:

- timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and
- adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time taken.

24. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 21, comprising programming instructions for:

- timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;
- reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in thea subject category; and

A2 adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

25. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

reading a time limit;

starting a timer;

waiting until the timer reaches the time limit;

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer having reached the time limit.

26. (Original) The computer readable medium according to claim 25, wherein the programming instructions for reading a time limit comprises programming instructions for:

receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

27. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;

and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.

28. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;

performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit declination to a preselected declination limit time; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

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29. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and

receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

30. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 29, further comprising programming instructions for:

storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit was too short;

waiting until a time period has elapsed;

obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;

performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and

adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

31. (Original) A computer readable medium for operating an expert answer web site comprising programming instructions for:

receiving a question from a question poser;

selecting a set of experts on the basis of one or more factors selected from a group consisting of the timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert; and

notifying the set of experts of the question.

32. (Original) The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

33. (Original) The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises

programming instructions for:

sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

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34. (Currently Amended) The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

generating and sending a ~~generating a~~ web page including the question.
